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## THE BURGLAR & THE GIRL

(MATTHEW BOULTON)

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SCENE.—*The Kitchen.*

TIME.—*Evening, during the serving of dinner.*

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# THE BURGLAR AND THE GIRL

A PLAYLET

By  
MATTHEW BOULTON

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# THE BURGLAR AND THE GIRL

First produced at the Pavilion Theatre, Weymouth, February 24, 1913.

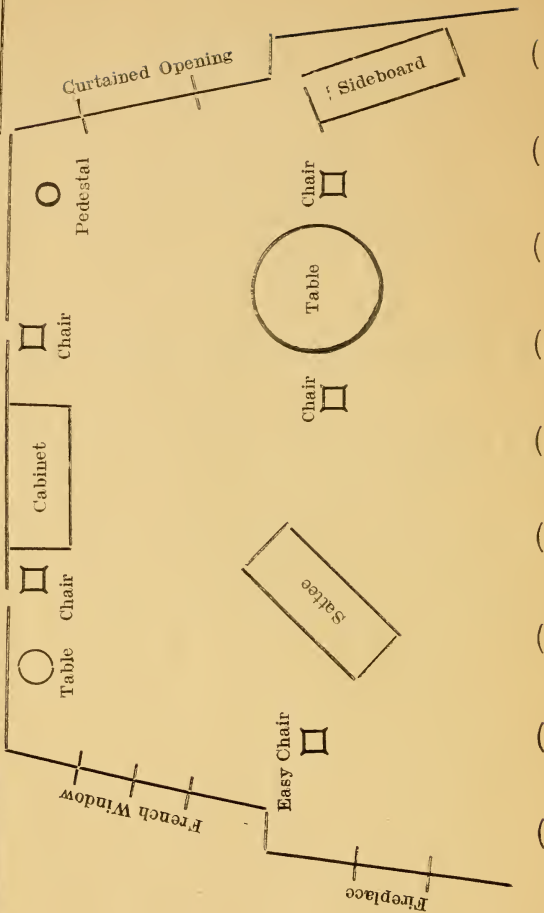
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## THE BURGLAR AND THE GIRL

SCENE.—*The drawing-room of a country house.*

TIME.—*Two a.m.*

PERIOD.—*The Present.*

*A well-furnished room. Fireplace R. French window set at an angle R.U.E. opening on to a terrace and balcony. Large opening L.U.E. leading to other parts of the house, covered by heavy plush curtains. Couch R. and easy chairs near fireside. Table of bric-à-brac at back, R. of French window. A glass-fronted cabinet at back L.C. containing one or two china ornaments and with a bowl or other ornament on top. Chairs either side. Table L. Sideboard L. set obliquely. Electric light switch at side of curtains L.U.E., controlling chandelier or bunch lights as may be arranged. Bell-rope next to it.*

*(No music for rise of curtain. A church clock is heard chiming the "quarters," and on the sound of the last "quarter" the curtain rises on an empty stage, which is in darkness except for the bright moonlight which shines through the French window R. The balcony outside is clearly seen. The sound of the quarters dies away and then the clock strikes "two." The head of a man appears above the balcony. He raises himself, climbs over and approaches the window. He carries a dark lantern and the usual burglar's outfit. He examines the window, then forces catch and enters quickly and stealthily.)*

BURGLAR. That opened easy. Must a' forgot to fasten it.

*(Flashes lantern round room. Goes to curtains L.U.E. which are drawn close, opens them and flashes light beyond them.)*

All's quiet! *(Goes to French window and carefully draws curtains across it.)* I felt a bit nervous crossin' the lawn—too much beastly moonshine for my fancy. *(Opens bag.)* Nar thin, where's this 'ere cab'net as me little donah told me abart? *(Flashes lantern until it rests on Cabinet at back L.)* Ah! 'ere we are—an' a very nice little cab'net too. *(Goes to cabinet and feels it.)* Now, this is the sort o' thing I like. One o' them pie-crust bits o' furniture—made ter be broken. This won't give me no trouble—no trouble whatso-heffer! *(Comes down.)* Blime! I've got a thirst on me—wonder if there's any gargle abart? *(Flashes lantern, walking round.)* Strike me up a gum tree! That's wot I calls mean—not a drop—not even a h'acid drop. Never mind—shan't leave me card an' shan't call 'ere any more. Thank 'eaven I 'as a bit o' pride left. *(Takes tools from bag.)* Now then, Mr. Cab'net, you'll pardon me, but in the words o' Billy Waggleshaft—"I mus' be crool to be kind." *(Commences to prize open the doors of the cabinet.)* - Oh, this is h'easy. I'll 'ave it open in 'arf a jiffy—in 'arf a jiffy. *(Opens cabinet.)* Beautiful! Now for a little conjurin' experiment.

*(Puts hand in cabinet and is about to lift up vase, when suddenly the lights are switched full on and a young girl of 17 or 18 years of age, appears through curtains L., levelling a little silver-plated revolver at the BURGLAR.)*

NOTE.—Girl's hair should be loose, or in two plaits, and she is in evening or party dress. The impression conveyed should be that she was about to retire when disturbed by the noise.

GIRL. Hands up!

BURGLAR. Copped, by jingo! (*Puts hands up.*)

GIRL (*calmly*). Yes, as you so expressively remarked you are certainly "copped." The next thing to do is to have you "coppered."

BURGLAR (*laughs uneasily*). Yer don't mean it?—you won't give me up. I didn't mean no 'arm, and I ain't took nothin'—straight I 'aven't. (*Drops arms, pleading.*)

GIRL. Keep your hands above your head and make less noise. Got any firearms on you?

BURGLAR. No, miss, nothin'.

GIRL. Come over here. I like to be sure.

(BURGLAR goes over and she feels all his pockets, still holding him up with revolver.)

All right. Two steps to the right. Now you can put your hands down.

BURGLAR (*amazed*). Crikey! You're a cool 'un, you are. There ain't no flies on you, miss.

GIRL. Don't speak so loud. I don't want the rest of the family disturbed.

BURGLAR. 'Ave they all gone to bed.

GIRL. All but myself.

BURGLAR. I wish you didn't keep such late hours.

GIRL. I don't as a rule. But, you see, I've been to a party and hadn't been in long when you called. So as the others are all asleep I thought I'd better come down and entertain you. Wasn't that nice of me?

BURGLAR. Oh yes, very kind of yer. I mus' say I couldn't a' wished for a warmer reception.

GIRL. So nice of you to say so.

BURGLAR (*impatient*). Oh, enough of this. What's yer next move, that's wot I want to know?

GIRL. Well, I'm not *quite* sure.

BURGLAR. I s'pose you're one o' the daughters?

GIRL. How clever of you to guess that?

BURGLAR. Why?

GIRL. Well, I might have been one of the sons, mightn't I? Yes, I'm the baby!

BURGLAR. I don't like babies with firearms. I wish you'd put it down, miss.

GIRL. I daresay you do, but I'm not quite so green as I look. And, as I said before, I don't want to wake the others.

BURGLAR (*reflecting*). Yer know, I thought all of yer 'ad gone away. I 'eard so.

GIRL. I'm afraid your informant made a slight mistake, my man. We don't go away till to-morrow.

BURGLAR. Strike me! the cook sed—— (*Stops himself.*)

GIRL. Oh, so you got your information from the cook, did you? Looks as if she'd roasted you, doesn't it?

BURGLAR (*suspicious*). Yer don't mean ter say as she told yer.

GIRL (*smiling*). Well, she dropped a little hint.

BURGLAR. Wot! Dropped a 'int as I was a-goin' ter break in 'ere?

GIRL. Yes.

BURGLAR (*savagely*). I'll wring 'er bloomin' neck when I see 'er again.

GIRL (*looks shocked*). I'm afraid you're not a nice burglar. Still you won't have much chance of carrying out your threat yet awhile. The police will see to that.

BURGLAR (*startled*). The police!

GIRL (*calmly*). I telephoned to the station before I entered this room.

BURGLAR (*angry*). You she—cat—I'll——

GIRL (*levelling revolver*). Keep your distance—or I'll shoot. I'm no bread and butter miss, you know. I'm not afraid of you or any man. I mean what I say.

BURGLAR (*retreating*). All right, miss, put it down—I'll keep quiet.

GIRL. Sit over there on the couch, then. I want a little serious talk with you.

BURGLAR (*grimly*). Goin' to keep me amused till the cops come, eh? I'm sure it's real kind of yer.

GIRL. Don't mention it.

BURGLAR. But I 'as a most important appointment—so if yer'll h'excuse me—— (*Makes as if to rise.*)

GIRL (*sharply*). Sit down. I've warned you twice. If you try that again you'll be dead before you've time to be sorry.

BURGLAR. All right—I wasn't goin' really. (*Shaking head, mournfully.*) Ah, you've got a 'ard 'eart, miss. I wouldn't a' believed a lovely young gel like you could be so stoney-'earted.

GIRL (*more kindly and very seriously*). And I wouldn't have believed that a fine well-set-up man like yourself could stoop to be a burglar—a low, common thief——

BURGLAR. Don't, miss, don't. I can't stand any one talkin' to me like that. I'm not used to it. An' it acts on my blinkers jes like onions—makes 'em water. (*Mops eyes with dirty handkerchief.*)

GIRL. Let me look at you.

(*He lifts his head.*)

You have an honest face.

BURGLAR (*disgusted*). Oh 'ave I? Well, you're the only one as thinks so. My people always thought I was cut out for a first-class criminal.

GIRL (*puzzled*). A first-class criminal?

BURGLAR (*with pride*). Yus! One who goes in for nothin' but the big jobs. Works 'em scientifically. Take this 'ere job for instance—a tidy 'and and I'd a pulled it off if it 'adn't been for you. An' I've been workin' on it for five or six weeks.

GIRL. Have you really. You must have a lot of patience.

BURGLAR (*amused*). Patience?—Why, bless yer 'eart, I've more patience than a cat waitin' fer a toy

dicky-bird to 'op off a Christmas-tree. Yer see, fust and all I read as 'ow yer mother 'ad some valuable jools in one o' them sassiety journals.

GIRL. Oh, so you do read the papers?

BURGLAR. Oh, yes, I allus reads the 'igh-class weeklies—them as is printed on coloured paper. Well, as soon as I sees this little parry-graft—I ses to meself, "Bob," I ses, "them jools is your's." O' course, that was only figger'tively speakin' I knew there was a lot o' graft to be done afore I could handle 'em. But I meant to 'ave 'em by 'ook or by crook.

GIRL. And you decided on the crook, I suppose?

BURGLAR. Yus—the fish was too big for an 'ook. But there was 'nother little fish that wasn't.

GIRL. You mean the cook?

BURGLAR. Guessed it, fust time. I laid meself out to 'ook the cook—'ad to give 'er the glad h'eye several times afore it come off though. But I got a nibble at last, pulled in my line an' landed 'er—'igh an' dry. But I'm afraid I'm keepin' you h'up, miss. (BUS.)

GIRL. Not at all, I've got to wait until the police come.

BURGLAR (*insinuating*). Can't trust me to wait by myself, I s'pose?

GIRL. I'm afraid not. Pray go on with your story. I'm most interested.

BURGLAR. Well, there ain't much more to tell. I courted 'er for all I was worth, and she fell a victim to me manly charms—yer needn't smile—she weren't the fust by no means. I coaxed 'er a bit, an' she told me as 'ow yer ma was a bit eccentric and allus kep' 'er jools in a cab'net in the drorin'-room 'stead of in a safe. Kidded 'erself no one 'ud think of lookin' for 'em there. But she reckoned without that lovely little bundle o' mischief, Polly Perkins. One moonlight night I'd 'ad a glass or two, I told 'er 'er lips was like peaches, an' she told me when the family

was goin' away. I told 'er 'er h'eyes was like stars, an' she dropped a 'int as to 'ow I'd find the h'early door. I told 'er 'er teeth was like pearls, an' she sed the missis's pearls was 'idden in the left 'and chiney vase in the cab'net in the drorin'-room.

GIRL. The left hand vase — yes, and the diamonds——

BURGLAR (*excited*). Oh, yus, the diamonds !

GIRL. What do *you* know about the diamonds ?

BURGLAR. Ha ! Ha ! What don't I know ? The diamonds is under a little panel jest under the vase. Oh, I got it all pat.

GIRL. Evidently. But don't you think you're rather foolish to tell me all this ?

BURGLAR (*recklessly*). Oh, I don't care—may as well be 'ung fer a sheep as a lamb. Besides, I've enjoyed our little confab, I 'ave straight.

GIRL. I'm sorry I can't say the same, I didn't believe there was so much downright wickedness in the world. I hope the judge will give you a long sentence, then perhaps it'll be a lesson to you and when you come out, you'll lead a better life.

BURGLAR. If I thought *you* wanted me to, miss, I'd try—straight I would. I'd do anythin' to win a smile from you—bless them bonny blue eyes of yours.

GIRL. That's quite enough. You won't hook me so easily, you know.

BURGLAR. 'Ook yer—*me* 'ook *you*. Why, you're as far above me as the stars. But I likes yer, miss—honest I do. I'm not throwing boquets at yer, but you've got real grit an' sense an' yer've done me good. I'll go to prison and do me time with a light 'eart, and when I come out, I'll chuck burglin' an' live honest.

GIRL. You mean that ?

BURGLAR. 'Onest injun !

GIRL. Then I'm going to give you a chance—see if there's any one about ?

BURGLAR (*goes to window*). Not a soul—all's quiet.

GIRL. Then go quickly before the police arrive; I'll explain somehow; I'll say it was a mistake—but go at once.

BURGLAR. Yer mean it, miss, you're goin' to let me off?

GIRL. Yes.

BURGLAR. You're a good sort, miss. I'll never forget yer. Will yer—will yer shake 'ands just once afore I go? It'll sort o' 'elp me to keep straight. Will yer, miss?

GIRL (*holds out hand, smiling*). Good-bye and good luck!

BURGLAR (*taking hand*). God bless yer! I——  
(*There is a quick scuffle, BURGLAR gets revolver and covers the GIRL who retreats to curtains L.U.E.*)

(*Triumphantly.*) Now then, me little beauty, I've got yer set! Move yer little finger and I'll drop a bit o' lead into yer. Thought you'd come it over me, didn't yer? Yer must 'ave thort me a soft sort of mug! Now, it's my turn to be funny, ain't it? But I ain't got no time to waste—I'm goin' to 'ave them jools and 'op it quick.

GIRL. You won't get far.

BURGLAR (*menacingly*). What d'yer mean?

GIRL. Listen to me; I'm not done yet. My hand is on the bell-rope; one sharp pull will rouse the house; my father's bedroom overlooks the lawn. He keeps a pistol handy—you wouldn't have much chance of getting away. He couldn't miss you on a night like this.

BURGLAR. None of yer bluff with me.

GIRL (*desperately*). It isn't bluff. If you don't keep still, I swear I'll pull the rope.

BURGLAR. If you do, I'll shoot.

GIRL. I don't care.

BURGLAR. What's to prevent me shooting you now—*quick—before* you pull the rope?

GIRL. Nothing. But if you do the rope will be pulled as I fall! Whatever you do now, you're bound to rouse the house.

BURGLAR. 'Struth, you're a plucky gel—a damned plucky gel, an' I admire yer for it. But I mean to 'ave them jools and I mean to get away with 'em. They're worth a bit o' risk, an' I'm goin' to take it. Nar then, let go that rope quick, or you're done for.

GIRL. I won't.

BURGLAR. We'll see about that. (*Creeps towards her levelling pistol.*) Let go that rope, I tell yer—damn you, let it go!

(*Gets right up to GIRL, she drops the bell-rope.*)

BURGLAR. Little bit o' bluff, eh? Not quite so plucky, after all. Nar then, you keep quiet, me little spitfire, or it'll be the worse for yer.

(*GIRL pulls handkerchief from bosom of her dress and sobs.*)

Cryin' now, are yer? Bet you'll leave yer dad to tackle the next burglar that comes along—oh, stop yer snivellin'!

(*GIRL puts handkerchief and both hands behind her back. She shakes out a small phial, removes cork and empties contents on to handkerchief, watching the BURGLAR all the while. Drops phial. BURGLAR backs towards cabinet.*)

Now, jes you keep quiet while I gets this little job over, an' I reckon I'll 'ave you this side of the room.

(*GIRL gasps suddenly.*)

What's the matter?

GIRL (*shrilly*). Look!—the police!

(*BURGLAR turns. Quick as lightning she throws one arm round his neck and with the other presses her chloroformed handkerchief to his nostrils. He gasps*

*and struggles for a moment, then falls to the floor, unconscious. GIRL removes handkerchief, looks at him swiftly.)*

He's safe for half an hour at least. I'm glad I had that chloroform with me.

*(Goes across stage and picks up long dustcoat and motor bonnet which she has hidden behind the side-board. Puts them on hurriedly.)*

Thank goodness, that's over! I never told so many lies in my life. The fool never guessed I was after the jewels myself.

*(Goes to the cabinet.)*

The left-hand vase!

*(Takes pearls out, places them on top of cabinet.)*

A little panel just under the vase! *(Takes diamonds out, holds pearls in other hand, smiling.)* A nice little haul—a very nice little haul!

*(Puts jewels in coat-pockets, switches off lights and goes softly to the window, turns and looks at BURGLAR.)*

Thanks for your assistance—my first-class criminal.

*(Lets herself out of window and closes it carefully. Disappears along balcony. The moonlight shines in on the prostrate BURGLAR. The church clock chimes a quarter past two.)*

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